



Building Healthy Worksites in Pierce County

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and four other employers are using grant funding to make the healthy choice the easy choice at work by changing work environments and creating new wellness policies.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (The Department) is leading the way in Pierce County in developing worksite wellness programs and policies that encourage employees to adopt healthier lifestyles and lower their risk of developing chronic diseases.

Five employers, including The Department, participated in the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)'s National Healthy Worksite Program (NHWP). This work is possible through new grant funding from State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevent Obesity, Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke (1422). The new grant includes technical assistance to help make sure that the policy, systems, and environmental changes that employers undertake are sustainable.

Creating a Healthy Worksite through Policy and Environmental Changes

Building a healthy worksite involves communications efforts, policy changes, and environmental supports.

This year, The Department:

- Created a policy and procedure for meals and refreshments served at agency-sponsored or funded events to help reduce waste and ensure that the food provided is healthy;
- Worked with a local farm to deliver Community Supported Agriculture boxes to the worksite for easy pickup and to provide fresh produce for six healthy cooking classes; and
- Worked with the vending machine provider to offer healthier options.

The other employers are taking on initiatives in their worksites to:

- Provide walking maps and organize walking groups;
- Organize and support walking meetings instead of seated meetings;
- Offer physical activity challenges and employer-sponsored walking teams; and
- Promote taking the stairs instead of the elevator.



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Diane Evans tests out the smoothie bike in the employee break room.

Source: Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

Quick Facts About 1422

State investments in community

\$1.62 million annually

Number of years awarded

4

Number of funded communities

5

Total number of counties reached

22

Total potential reach

2,108,010 adult community members

Employers are sharing and learning from each other about policies and environmental changes that are effective in their work place. These employers recognize the importance of this work in improving the health of their employees and creating sustainability for their wellness programs.

Engaging Employees in Wellness at the Workplace

Getting employees excited about being healthy is key for participation in a healthy worksite program. A strategy that is working well for employers in Pierce County is to engage employees by pairing wellness activities with challenges. Social support is important too—employees are more likely to be involved if other people are taking part and cheering them on.

The Department modeled this with a smoothie day, incorporating a bicycle-

powered blender that served up five fruit and vegetable smoothies for employees to sample. Employees had a chance to hop on the bike and make their own smoothie too. Event planners made sure that the smoothie day took place during a 30-day fruit and vegetable challenge to give employees a concrete opportunity to participate in the challenge and participants took home smoothie recipes to share with their families.

The Department also sponsored a Dessert Challenge to see who could make a dessert that fell into one or more of the following categories: lower fat, lower sugar, naturally sweetened, vegan, hidden veggie, raw or gluten-free. Over 20 desserts were entered and all of them adhered to one or more categories.



DOH 140-110 January 2016

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This work was supported by the Washington State Department of Health, Office of Healthy Communities through the **State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevent Obesity, Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke (1422)** award and the Prevention and Public Health Fund from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as part of the Affordable Care Act.